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Congress of the United States

CONGRESSIONAL TASK FORCE ON AFGHANISTAN

Washington, DC 20510

January 12, 1987

Honorable George Shultz
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are deeply concerned with press reports regarding the United States position on the issue of a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. As you know, February 11 marks the beginning of the next round of U.N. sponsored "proximity talks" on the question of a political settlement of the Afghan war. If such reports are accurate, the State Department's policies seriously endanger the future of Afghanistan.

A December 13, 1986 New York Times article states: "The parties have already agreed that the flow of arms to the rebels would be halted before the withdrawal of Soviet forces begins." In response to a question about what the State Department considers "an acceptable short timetable for withdrawal," on January 7, 1987, you are quoted as replying: "They can't be in there for a year or more in a withdrawal process and have it be a meaningful kind of thing."

Mr. Secretary, is this an accurate account? In consultations with the government of Pakistan or with U.N. representatives, has the State Department agreed to terminate aid to the resistance as a precondition for Soviet withdrawal? Has the State Department given any public or private indications that a withdrawal time-table of just less than one year would be acceptable?

If so, we must register our strongest objections to what can only guarantee a "sell out" of the Afghan people.

The Soviets hope to demoralize the resistance by making them believe that they will be abandoned, and that a deal will be cut over their heads. By excluding resistance representatives, the "proximity talks" help engender that fear. If in addition the mujahideen should perceive that the U.S. stands ready to cut off aid while the country is still under Soviet occupation, their sense of isolation will grow.

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The Soviet Union's long-term strategy in Afghanistan is to gradually destroy the resistance. They must not be permitted to achieve through "proximity talks" what they have been unable to secure through seven years of aggression and brutality. The United States should not accept any political settlement that would gamble the lives and fortunes of the people of Afghanistan on Soviet promises to withdraw.

In recent days, the Soviets have said they would consider some form of unity government in Afghanistan that would include representatives of the resistance. But there cannot be a genuine government of national unity in an occupied country. If the Soviet Union wants support for the resistance to cease, let them withdraw their troops. Once the 115,000 Soviet troops are gone, there will be no need for aid to the resistance because there will be no one to fight.

As members of the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, we want you to know that we will oppose any political settlement that would end aid to the resistance as a precondition to Soviet troop withdrawal. We also implore you to take note of Senate Resolution 31. In the second roll call vote of the 100th Congress, the United States Senate unanimously adopted a resolution that urges the Soviets to present "an expeditious timetable of no more than four months in accord with the stated position of the government of Pakistan, for the complete withdrawal of its forces." The resolution also urges the government of Pakistan to "resist the pressure of the Soviet Union to accept anything less than such a timetable for withdrawal."

In our policy toward Afghanistan, we need to hold fast to our principles: all Soviet troops and military "advisers" out of Afghanistan, the country's sovereignty restored and guaranteed, and the Afghans left free to determine their own political future. These goals can best be secured when the resistance is confident of our support, and the Soviets are certain of our determination.

Sincerely,



HONORABLE GORDON J. HUMPHREY
U.S. Senator



HONORABLE JACK KEMP
U.S. Representative